

AML2070
Survey of American Literature

Instructor Name: Shuya Su

Days/Period: MWF 5 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM)

Bldg/Room: MAT 0007

Office Hours (Days/Times): F 2PM-4PM TUR 4335 or by appointment

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Course Description:

This course offers a survey of American literature and narrative from the precolonial period to the present, with a special focus on representations of childhood. Organized largely chronologically, the class will examine how American childhoods have been imagined, constructed, and contested in literature across different historical moments. We will read both canonical works – texts widely regarded as central to American literary identity – and lesser-known texts or texts that are not often featured in general-education literature syllabi. The canon refers to the body of literature that is considered high-quality, artistic, and valued representations of American identity. In doing so, we'll explore how literature has helped shape evolving ideas of nationhood, identity, and belonging through the figure of the Child. From early colonial schoolbooks to contemporary Young Adult novels, our readings will invite us to ask not just what American literature is, but who it's for – and who it leaves out.

Prerequisite Course: ENC 1101 or test score equivalent.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition Courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- Content: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- Communication: Students communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- Critical Thinking: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Course Materials:

All books will be made available as eBooks.

We Are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom (2020) [978-1250203557]

The New-England Primer, 1777 edition [978-1947844346]

[*The McGuffey Second Reader, revised edition*](#)

[*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave by Frederick Douglass \(1845\)*](#)

[*Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe \(1852\)*](#)

[*Poems Published in The Brownies' Book, 1920-1921*](#)

[*Mrs. Spring Fragrance by Sui Sin Far \(1912\)*](#)

[*Angel Island poems*](#)

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr (1977) [978-0142401132]

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle (1962) [978-0312367541]

[*"The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury \(1950\)*](#)

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson (1977) [978-0064401845]

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt (1975) [978-0312369811]

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (2007) [978-0316013697]

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (2012) [978-1442408937]

Assignments & Grade Distribution:

Assignment	Length	Grade Distribution	Due Date
Attendance and Participation		100	
Reflection Essay	6*400 words	6*50 points	
Close Reading Assignment	750 words	150 points	10/12
Banned Book Case Study	750 words	100 points	11/2
Annotated Bibliography	600 words	100 points	11/9
Critical Analysis Paper with Peer	1500 words	250 points	12/3

Review			
	6000 words	1000 points	

- **Attendance and Participation (100 points)**

Given that this is a discussion-based course, attendance and participation in discussion and group activities are vital to success in this course. Students will be required to occasionally work in small groups, consistently participate in class discussion, conduct writing workshops, and complete peer reviews. Students are expected to be prepared for unannounced quizzes and activities on readings. Students must be present for all in-class activities in order to receive credit. In-class activities cannot be made up. You will be required to generate at least one question, comment, observation, or criticism of the assigned reading and share it with the class during discussion. Failure to participate in class discussion will result in a reduction of your participation grade. Students are required to bring a copy of the assigned text to class. A digital copy of the text is allowable. Failure to bring a copy of the assigned reading will also result in a reduction of your participation grade. I will complete “text checks” to make sure you have your textbook or copy of the assigned reading.

All students should participate in each class session in some manner by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, participating in group activities, and/or writing when it is required. If you have concerns with public speaking, please see me for alternative activities to meet participation requirements. These can include submitting observations, questions, or discussion topics prior to class.

- **Reflection Essay (6*400 words; 6*50 points = 300 points)**

Students will write six short reflection essays responding to specific prompts tied to the weekly readings and themes. These essays encourage you to engage both personally and analytically with the texts and ideas we explore in class. Each reflection asks you to consider how children’s literature shapes and challenges notions of American identity. Your responses should connect course materials to your own insights, showing critical thinking about the historical and social contexts of the works.

Reflections are concise (approximately 400 words) to encourage focused writing and thoughtful engagement without extensive research. You are expected to reference at least one text from the week and support your observations with examples or quotations. Reflections are due by 11:59 PM on the Sunday following the relevant week. These assignments will help prepare you for longer analytical writing by developing your skills in synthesis, interpretation, and thematic discussion.

#1 Becoming American

This prompt invites you to explore how foundational stories and concepts, especially Indigenous narratives, shape the idea of America itself. Consider how American identity is tied to land, history, and storytelling, and how Indigenous perspectives challenge the dominant narratives of nationhood and belonging.

#2 Childhood and Nation-Building

Both *The New-England Primer* (1777) and *The McGuffey Second Reader* (revised edition) were used to teach children how to read – but they also taught them how to think, behave, and belong. Reflect on how these texts imagine the role of the child in early American society. What values or beliefs are they trying to instill? How do they connect childhood to broader ideas of morality, citizenship, or national identity? You may also consider what changes between the two texts and what those changes suggest about shifting ideas of American childhood.

#3 The Politics Childhood Innocence

This week's readings – excerpts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and poems from *The Brownies' Book* – show different ways childhood innocence is portrayed and contested. Reflect on how one or more of these texts depict childhood innocence. What social or political forces shape who is granted or denied innocence? Is the very concept of "childhood innocence" itself problematic? How do these texts support or challenge dominant ideas about childhood, morality, and power?

#4 Childhoods at the Margins

Immigrant childhood stories reveal the complexities of belonging in America. Reflect on how these texts depict inclusion and exclusion in the American nation, and how childhood experiences are central to understanding American identity as contested and evolving.

#5 Choose Your Topic

Choose one of the following themes from recent weeks to reflect on:

➤ Childhood in the Age of Technological Anxiety (Week 8)

Reflect on how technology shapes childhood in texts like *A Wrinkle in Time* and "The Veldt." How do these works express hopes, fears, or tensions about technology's impact on children and society?

➤ Childhood Unbound in the '70s (Week 9)

Consider how childhood is imagined as a site of radical change and liberation in the 1970s. How do social movements like the Children's Liberation Movement or works like those by Katherine Paterson challenge traditional ideas about childhood?

➤ Death, Grief, and Taboo (Week 10)

Explore how childhood and death are represented in literature. Do you think that death is or should be a taboo topic for children? How do the texts you read confront or complicate common attitudes toward death in relation to children?

#6 Otherwise Adolescence

Reflect on how *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and/or *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* challenge normalizing ideas of adolescence. Consider how these texts offer new ways of understanding what it means to grow up in the United States today.

Close Reading Assignment (750 words; 150 points) due on 10/12

This essay will be a close reading (without any outside sources or research) of any one text on our syllabus that we have previously covered in class. These papers must be thesis driven and focus on critically examining one passage, symbol, theme, etc., of

the text. Since this will be an original argument, no outside sources should be used, and you should make an argument about the text and use the text as evidence. This assignment is not a book report so summaries will not be accepted. Focus on a single passage in a text that we have read so far and trace out how the author develops a particular idea/theme through that passage. You should display how the author creates meaning through ideas like characterization, diction, literary devices, and narrative structure, etc. Quotes and passages from the texts should serve as evidentiary support and should be properly integrated into your paper.

Banned Book Case Study (750 words; 100 points) due on 11/2

In this case study, students will investigate a children's or YA book that has been banned or challenged in the United States. You'll explore not only the reasons behind its censorship but also how the book reflects (or contests) ideas about childhood, nationhood, race, gender, class, or other themes we've explored this semester.

Annotated Bibliography (600 words; 100 points) due on 11/9

Students will research four scholarly peer reviewed articles that will aid in writing your Critical Analysis Papers. You will, in 150 words for each entry: 1) provide a brief summary of the source; 2) discuss the author's argument; and 3) connect the source to the topic of their Critical Analysis paper. At least two of the sources must have been published in the last 10 years. You will use MLA (9th Edition) for their citations.

Critical Analysis Paper (1500 words; 250 points) due on 12/3

This essay will be a sustained formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about one or two literary text(s) through a theoretical, historical, or critical lens. This essay must contain 2-3 critical academic sources.

Grading Scale:

A: 94-100 (4.0)
A-: 90-93 (3.67)
B+: 87-89 (3.33)
B: 84-86 (3.0)
B-: 80-83 (2.67)
C+: 77-79 (2.33)
C: 74-76 (2.0)
C-: 70-73 (1.67)
D+: 67-69 (1.33)
D: 64-66 (1.0)
D-: 60-63 (.67)
E: 0-59 (0)

Note: A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit. A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. Grades will NOT be rounded up at the end of the semester. For further information on

UF's Grading Policy, see: <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

All papers are graded on a percentage scale of 1 to 100%: 90-100, excellent; 80-89, good to very good; 73-79 below average to average; below 72 is not a passing grade. Assignment specific rubrics will be included on each assignment's Canvas page. However, each assignment's rubric will include the above qualifiers with regards to an assignment's thesis, argumentation (e.g. evidence and analysis), style/language, and conclusion.

A general rubric is provided below.

- An A paper includes an excellent thesis that conveys its ideas clearly and without ambiguity, develops an effective organization of its ideas, and provides effective analysis of evidence from its chosen text.
- A B paper includes a good thesis that could use clarification, attempts to develop clear organization of its ideas, and would benefit from further analysis of the text.
- A C paper includes a sufficient thesis but is generally obscure about what it intends to argue, does not adequately connect its ideas, and would benefit from further analysis of alternative evidence.
- A D paper does not make a claim, does not develop or connect its ideas, and provides little to no evidence in its analysis.

For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

University Policies and Resources:

Completion

You MUST complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

Attendance

More than six (6) absences will result in automatic failure of the course. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events (such as athletics and band) and religious holidays are exempt from this policy with documentation. I will consider documented extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. For further information on university attendance policy, please see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Paper Format & Submission

All papers will be submitted through Canvas in an accepted electronic file format (.doc, .docx, .rtf) unless otherwise explicitly stated. Papers should be formatted in accordance with MLA formatting (Times New Roman 12pt, double-spaced, one-inch margins, MLA header, and MLA citations).

Late Papers/Assignments

Papers submitted late will incur a 10% grade deduction for each of the first three days past the deadline. Papers later than three (3) days will earn a 0, save for any extenuating

circumstances.

Students requiring accommodation

Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF course evaluation process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

University of Florida students are bound by the Honor Pledge. On all work submitted for credit by a student, the following pledge is required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Student Honor Code and Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code, as well as the process for reported allegations and sanctions that may be implemented. All potential violations of the code will be reported to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. If a student is found responsible for an Honor Code violation in this course, the instructor will enter a Grade Adjustment sanction which may be up to or including failure of the course. For additional information, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conductcode/>.

In-class recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such

as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party-note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Procedure for conflict resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008TUR). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).

Resources Available to Students

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: umatter@ufl.edu; 352-392-1575.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1575.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center; 352-392-1161.
- University Police Department: <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>; 352-392-1111 (911 for emergencies).

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: learning-support@ufl.edu; <https://elearning.ufl.edu>; 352-392-4357.
- Career Connections Center: Reitz Union; <http://www.career.ufl.edu/>; 352-392-1601.
- Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.
- Academic Resources: 1317 Turlington Hall; 352-392-2010; <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu>.
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall; <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Weekly Schedule

*The schedule below is subject to change and may not necessarily reflect all smaller assignments or minor readings.

Week 1 Course Introductions		
8/22	Review syllabus & get to know each other	
Week 2 Theoretical Foundations and Indigenous Storytelling		
8/25	What is American (Children's) Literature?	
8/27	How the World was Made from Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Perspectives	
8/29	<i>We Are Water Protectors</i> by Carole Lindstrom (2020)	Reflection paper #1 due by the weekend
Week 3 Childhood in the American Colonies		
9/1	Holiday – No Class	
9/3	<i>The New-England Primer</i> , 1777 edition	
9/5	<i>The New-England Primer</i> , 1777 edition	
Week 4 Childhood in the Early Republic		
9/8	<i>The McGuffey Second Reader</i>, revised edition	
9/10	<i>The McGuffey Second Reader</i>, revised edition	
9/12	<i>The McGuffey Second Reader</i>, revised edition	Reflection paper #2 due by the weekend
Week 5 The Politics of Childhood Innocence		
9/15	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> by Frederick Douglass (1845) – excerpts on childhood	
9/17	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852) – excerpts on Eva & Topsy	
9/19	<i>Poems Published in The Brownies' Book, 1920-1921</i>	Reflection paper #3 due by the weekend
Week 6 Childhoods at the Margins 1		
9/22	<i>Mrs. Spring Fragrance</i> by Sui Sin Far (1912) – “The	

	Story of a Little Chinese Seabird”	
9/24	Angel Island poems	
9/26	Close Reading Workshop	
Week 7 Childhoods at the Margins 2		
9/29	<i>Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes</i> by Eleanor Coerr (1977)	
10/1	<i>Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes</i> by Eleanor Coerr (1977)	
10/3	Writing Session – No Class	Reflection paper #4 due by the weekend
Week 8 Childhood in the Age of Technological Anxiety		
10/6	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> by Madeleine L’Engle (1962)	
10/8	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> by Madeleine L’Engle (1962)	
10/10	“The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury (1950)	Close reading due by the weekend
Week 9 Childhood Unbound in the 70s		
10/13	<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> by Katherine Paterson (1977)	
10/15	<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> by Katherine Paterson (1977)	
10/17	Homecoming – No Class	
Week 10 Death, Grief, and Taboo		
10/20	<i>Tuck Everlasting</i> by Natalie Babbitt (1975)	
10/22	<i>Tuck Everlasting</i> by Natalie Babbitt (1975)	
10/24	What makes death “appropriate”? Banned book project intro	Reflection paper #5 due by the weekend
Week 11 Otherwise Adolescence 1		
10/27	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie (2007)	
10/29	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie (2007)	
10/31	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by	Banned book case study due by the weekend

	Sherman Alexie (2007)	
Week 12 Critical Analysis Paper Workshop Series		
11/3	Critical Analysis Paper Workshop	
11/5	Annotated Bibliography Workshop	
11/7	MLA Citation Workshop	Annotated Bibliography due by the weekend
Week 13 Otherwise Adolescence 2		
11/10	<i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe</i> by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (2012)	
11/12	<i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe</i> by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (2012)	
11/14	<i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe</i> by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (2012)	Reflection paper #6 by the weekend
Week 14 Peer-Review & Revision		
11/17	Writing Session – No Class	
11/19	Peer-Review Session	Peer-review draft due before class
11/21	No Class	
Week 15 Thanksgiving		
11/24-11/28	Holiday – No Class	
Week 16 End of Semester Party		
12/1	Snack Party!	
12/3	No Class	Critical analysis paper due at midnight